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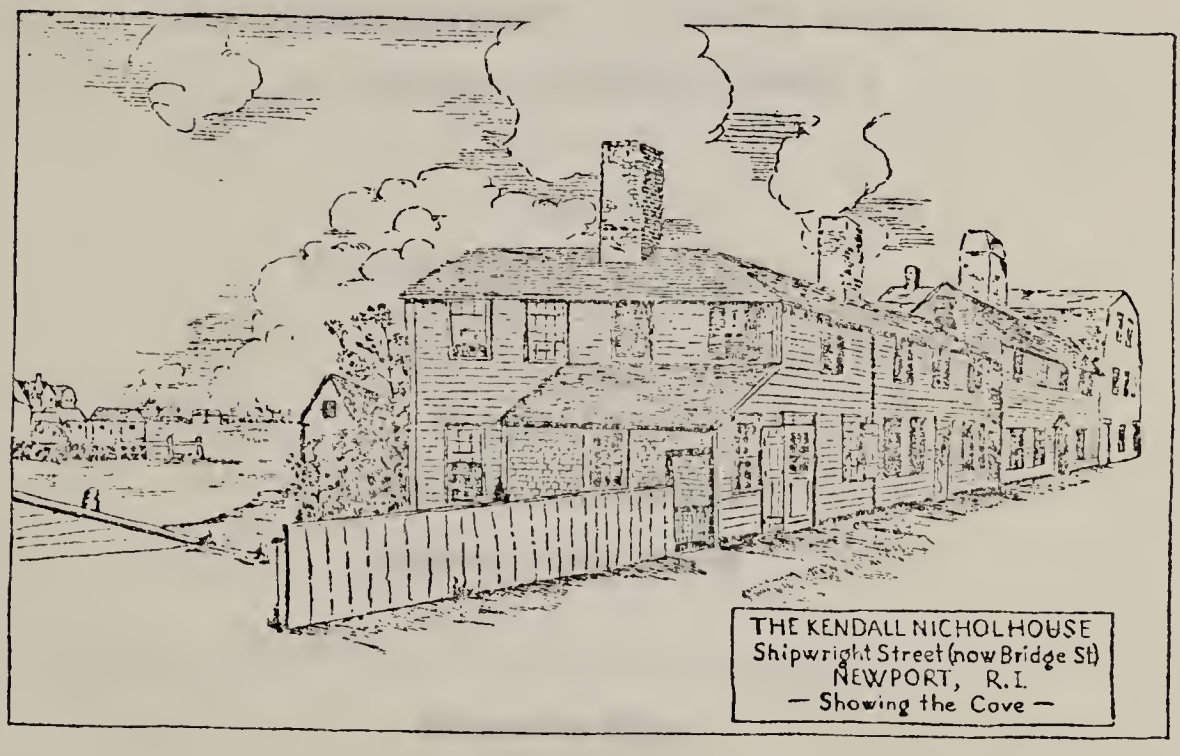
MERCHANTS AND MANSIONS

OF

BYGONE DAYS



THE KENDALL NICHOL HOUSE
Shipwright Street (now Bridge St)
NEWPORT, R.I.
— Showing the Cove —

BY

ELTON MERRITT MANUEL

1774631

MERCHANTS *and* MANSIONS

of

BYGONE DAYS

An authentic account of the early settlers of Newport, Rhode Island

by

ELTON MERRITT MANUEL

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ELTON MERRITT MANUEL

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THE RAPID growth of the little colony of Pocassett (Portsmouth, R. I.) settled by those sturdy pioneers who made their way to southern Rhode Island to escape the oppression imposed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, resulted in the founding of Newport. During the latter part of April 1639, Nicholas Easton and his two sons left the Pocassett settlement in a boat to explore the southern end of the island, and landed at nightfall on an island, where they camped, and the next morning named it Coaster's Harbor. They were so impressed with the gentle sloping land, and fine protected harbor stretching to the south, and gave such a favorable report upon their return that the others joined them in making a more thorough survey of the area. Their first disappointment was that the entire length of the west shore of the island was a dense swamp, and they decided to locate the town near what is now Eastons Beach, but finding no anchorage here, and also no protection from the sea, they agreed to return to the west harbor. The problem of filling in the swamp was soon overcome by the work of some friendly Indians, who fired the swamp, and with the help of the whites, filled in the marshy ground with sand and gravel until it was suitable for building.

In May, 1639, the corporation empowered Mr. Jefferay, Wm. Dyre, and John Clarke to lay out the grounds for the new settlement — several persons being present who wished to build. A plank walk was laid out, running north and south through the marshy grounds. Later when the street was permanent, it was one mile long, and the original name, "The Strand" was changed to Thames Street. Home lots of four acres each, most of them extending from the Back (Spring), Street, to the bay were assigned to the proprietors. The first houses were built in the vicinity of Marlborough Street, the Easton house on the east side of Farewell Street near Coddington Street. The Coddington house, demolished in 1835, was on the north side of Marlborough Street, facing Duke Street. This old house was built about 1670. Various other

merchants being commercially inclined, built their homes on the high land overlooking the harbor. At this early time, the houses were built far back on the east side of Thames Street, no expectations were entertained of having buildings on the west side, consequently no room was left for that purpose. But as the town grew and navigation increased some of the merchants built short wharves at the foot of their gardens, and it was with ease that they could sit in their windows and watch the coming and going of their vessels, and the discharging of the cargoes consigned to them. The ebb and flow of the tide caused the vessels to ground in the shallow water near the shore, and in time the wharves were lengthened to find deeper water. Many of the merchants had sea-walls built and the land filled in to make a location for their stores and warehouses. By the end of 1758 a few mansion houses stood on the west side of the street, and thus it changed into the narrow highway that we know today.

In 1715 a grant was placed on the slave traffic by the General Assembly. The money derived from this act was used in the town for the purpose of defraying the expenses of paving the public streets. This grant was carried on for seven years and during that period many of the old streets of the town were paved from the proceeds of the slave trade.

From the days of the first settlers, the town had a varied and interesting history. An account of the association and transactions with the Indians, the prosperous days of commerce and manufacture, the Revolution, with the invasion of the British and Hessian troops, and the welcome visit of the French allies, the decline of business, and the deplorable conditions after the war, the stories of early residents including distinguished authors, artists, heroes of the Army and Navy, noted merchants and other eminent men of all professions, could be compiled in a most interesting history, and make a large volume.

From the beginning, the town grew rapidly, becoming the most flourishing on the Atlantic seaboard. Before the Revolution its commerce greatly outranked that of New York. Its geographical opportunities of ocean and sheltered harbor, and the unusual

freedom of its religious tolcrance attracted merchants and others interested in industrial projects, from many different countries. It became one of the chief ports of call of the so-called "Triangle Trade" that led its seamen into all corners of the world, while at home industrial plants increased — distilleries, refineries, rope walks, spermaceti factories, tanneries and other products for exportation.

One of the earliest business districts of the town prior to the Revolution, was that portion extending along the upper harbor and known as Easton's Point. A large number of wharves and warehouses extending from Coaster's Harbor Island to the Long Wharf, were built to accomodate the numerous vessels that were constantly discharging their cargoes from all parts of the world. A group of spermaceti factories, located on the southern end of the street were owned and operated by wealthy Jewish merchants, and the manufacture of candles was one of the chief industries of the Point. The increasing demand for vessels to carry on the Triangle Trade between this coast and Africa was accommodated in the various shipyards so advantageously located in the neighborhood. A group of stores located on a wharf just north of the present Elm Street pier and once owned by George Rome stood long after the Revolution. Along this narrow busy street stood many of the dwelling houses of the merchants who were largely responsible for the development of the commerce in this portion of the town. Many of these old houses are still standing and furnish the antiquarian many interesting studies of Colonial architecture and Colonial beauty.

On December 8, 1776, the English army landed at Weaver's Cove near Mr. Stoddard's house in Portsmouth, R. I. On the following morning the 22nd Regiment went down on their transports under cover of a few ships of war and took possession of Newport. From this time until the evacuation, some four years later, the commerce of the town was virtually at a standstill. Before the winter was over the suffering of the inhabitants was very great. Wood was selling at fabulous prices, and the English had to send as far as Shelter Island, N. Y. for it. Although the ships were gone five weeks they brought back only 400 cords, far less than required for

the consumption of the garrison which amounted to about 300 cords a week. To satisfy the need for fuel many old houses, warehouses and docks were demolished. Several old ships were beached and the wood distributed among the inhabitants. As the years went on poverty became greater and greater. Then in October 1779, the transports gathered in the harbor, and the English troops accompanied by many Tory families sailed for New York, and once more Newport was in friendly hands. But the British had destroyed everything; most of the churches had been used as barracks or riding schools, the Library had been ransacked, and the Colony House used as a hospital. It seemed almost impossible for the town to ever regain its former prosperity. In the summer of 1870, word came that the French Fleet was sighted off Brenton's Reef. This was welcome news for the French had come to help the struggling colonists. The soldiers were landed, quarters were given to the officers, and for a year the poverty was forgotten in the gay balls and brilliant suppers given in honor of these welcome allies. On the following year, the French troops reluctantly left Newport to join the southern campaign and once again the inhabitants were left to pursue their neglected commercial trade with foreign nations.

At the close of the Revolution, commerce was slow in returning to Newport, commercial relations, so long neglected, were hard to secure a second time. Other seaboard towns had more advantages to offer, consequently the commerce of Newport suffered. The final break came with the War of 1812. After this war the commercial business collapsed and from this time Newport was never known as a commercial town. Many of the warehouses previously crammed with the products of the world were torn down, docks began to decay, leaving the sturdy mansion houses of the early merchants of the once busy town.

Prior to the Revolution, the northern end of Water (Washington) Street, on the site of the small park that affords such a charming view of the entire harbor, there were four houses, These, by order of the commanding officer of Rhode Island, were torn down to afford a suitable situation for the erection of the North Battery.

They included the house and bake house of John Warren, and the dwelling house of Job Bennett, the small house of Mrs. Mary Wing was enclosed in the battery, but was later destroyed by the British troops. In June 1783, Mrs. Wing sent a petition to the General Assembly then in session for payment of the house, and on the following October the committee reported to the Assembly that they should pay the petitioner thirty pound for the house. One of the French nobles who joined the American army during the Revolution was Major Louis Tousard. During his stay in Rhode Island he was given the task of strengthening the Dumplings and the North Battery. He was in command of the left wing of Sullivan's army at the Battle of Rhode Island, and during the engagement his right arm was so shattered by a cannon ball, as to render amputation necessary. He resigned from the American army in 1781, and died in Paris in 1817. The fortification that we see at the park was built under this eminent officer.

Just across the street stood a small house which had been used in the earlier days as a tavern. It was called "The Butterfly", and was removed from this site to a new one at the lower end of Thames Street. On the east side, south of Chestnut Street, stood the foundation of an old house. This belonged to the Goddard family, and during the Revolution was used as quarters for several English officers. When the English evacuated the town they burned the house along with many others. In later years the foundation was filled in and the property is now occupied by a private garden.

At the foot of Walnut Street on Washington Street, stands an old house, once the home of Captain Thomas Brownell, who achieved distinction as one of the sailing masters under Oliver Hazard Perry, at the Battle of Lake Erie.

Just across the street is the Southwick house, now greatly changed from its original architecture. It was built about fifteen years prior to the Revolution and was occupied by the British troops during their stay on the island. It was here that the valiant publisher, Solomon Southwick, once made his home. Southwick was a poor boy who was befriended and educated by Henry Collins, a prominent merchant, who hearing that the Newport Mercury

was for sale, purchased it, and placed Southwick as its editor. This transaction took place in 1768. Southwick's slogan adopted in December 1769, "undaunted by Tyrants—We'll die or be free" was a courageous stand for the young editor to take in the troubled times before the Revolution. As war became inevitable, he increased his criticisms, and when the English troops landed at Portsmouth, R. I., he buried his press in the backyard of the old Kilborne House that stood on the northeast corner of Broadway and Kilborne Court, and fled to Rehoboth, Mass. His hiding place was discovered by the pillaging troops, and the press was removed, cleaned off and used for the printing of their orders and newspapers during their stay on the Island. When peace was declared Southwick returned to Newport and lived in the old house. An insight to his character is given by a slate memorial erected in the Common Burial Ground and reads as follows:

In
Memory
of
SOLOMON SOUTHWICK, Esq.
A Gentleman of Liberal Edueation
And Expansive Mind
For Many Years the Proprietor and Editor
of the Newport Mercury
And Commissary General
For the State of Rhode Island
In the Revolutionary War.
He died December 23, 1796
In the 66th Year of His Age

Just, Generous, Good, Benevolent, Sincere
Was He Whose Hallow'd Dust Reposes Here
If E'er a Prayer He Breathed To Heaven
That Prayer Was For His Country's Glory Given

J. Stevens.

The noted cabinet makers, John and Thomas Goddard whose handiwork is now so valued and sought by leading museums, lived on the northwest corner of Willow and Washington Streets. This old house occupied the site of the present Covell house. The Goddard house was moved to Second Street near Pine Street, and the old workshop to its present location on a small court off Poplar Street.

The old Robinson house stands on the northwest corner of Washington and Poplar Streets. The property was originally divided by the Proprietors of the Point into four lots, the two southermost of these, on which the old house stood were sold by William Covey and wife to Henry Knowles on June 1, 1756. On August 3, 1759, Knowles sold the property to Edward Wanton, Mariner, who, in the following year sold it to Thomas Robinson. At that time the house was known as the old Tavern. Robinson married the daughter of Thomas Richardson in 1752. The four rooms on the north side of the house, the present stairway, and woodwork were added to the house by Robinson.

In 1776-79 there were several English Officers quartered in the house. One of them fell in love with Mary Robinson, the oldest daughter, who was at that time nineteen years old. This officer, named Thomas Parkins was killed at Yorktown at the time of the surrender of Cornwallis. During the French occupation in 1781, the Vicomte de Noailles, commander of the Soissonnois Infantry, was quartered here. He was much surprised to find the entire family spoke French. The Vicomte left the Robinson's with much regret when the Army left Newport in June of the following year, and as a parting present gave Mrs. Robinson a bronze tea-kettle that had served as a part of his camp equipment, a relic that is a prized possession of the family. The present owner who lives in Philadelphia in the winter has among her possessions a valuable set of seven or eight pieces of Sevres china which the Countess de Noailles, the wife of the French officer, and later a victim of the guillotine, sent during the year 1781 to Sarah Robinson, wife of Thomas Robinson, and great, great grandmother of the present owner.

Henry Collins who owned the property just across the driftway was born in Newport in 1699. He was educated in England and on his return to Newport was deeply interested in the welfare of the town, and was instrumental in the building of the Granary, the lengthening of the Long Wharf, and the construction of the Sabbatarian Church. He gave to Abraham Redwood, founder of the Redwood Library, a deed, "to a certain lot formerly called Bowling Green under the yearly rental of one peppercorn if demanded." He also befriended Ebenezer Flagg, then a poor boy, and founded the firm of Collins and Flagg, later to become Collins, Flagg and Engs. His liberality led to a considerable dimunition of his fortune, followed by disastrous losses under the Admirality Laws of 1756, which ruined him financially, and he died in poverty under the roof of Ebenezer Flagg, about 1770.

His estate was taken over by George Rome, an agent for Hayley and Hopkins of London, who advertised in the Newport Mercury of June 25, 1764, as follows:

> "This is to give notice that all persons indebted to Mr. Henry Collins of Newport, Rhode Island and the company of Collins and Flagg, and the company of Collins, Flagg and Engs are desired to prepare their respective balance to the order of the subscriber only who is alone enabled to give full discharge." George Rome

Rome continued to live in Newport and acquired a vast estate in Narragansett where he entertained large numbers of friends. When the Revolution broke out he remained loyal to the Crown, and was forced to seek protection aboard the frigate Rose, then lying in the harbor. His estate, consisting of one great brewery, south of the First Baptist Church, (the products of which were carried by an aqueduct to the Courthouse cellar where it was fermented and sold) a Tan Yard, two dwelling houses on the south side of the Parade, the estate, consisting of 700 acres in Narragansett, and the estate on Washington Street, were confiscated by the General Assembly. In 1781 the French had their Naval

Artillery headquarters in the Collins House.

Dr. William Hunter was born in Scotland in 1731 and died in Newport, R. I., in 1777. He studied medicine in Edinborough and came to America about 1752 and became physician and surgeon general of the State soon after. He served in the unfortunate campaign against the French in General Abercrombie's expedition. He purchased the house south of the Collins house, and resided there many years. This old house was built by Jonathan Nichols, son of Governor Nichols about 1754. The architectural beauty of this fine old house is attributed to Peter Harrison, one of New England's earliest architects. In the year 1756, Dr. Hunter gave at Newport, R. I., the first anatomical and surgical lectures ever delivered in the colonies. They were delivered in the Colony House two seasons in succession. It was to this house that the French brought Admiral Chevalier de Ternay when he was taken ill aboard his flagship in the harbor. And it was from this house on the 16th of December 1780 that the nobles of France followed their beloved leader to his last resting place in the Trinity Churchyard.

Just south of this estate was that of Joseph Warren, another wealthy merchant who sold his property to Jacob Roderiquez Rivera in 1783. Rivera at first emigrated from New York to Curacao where he married and lived for a short time, returning later to New York where he was naturalized in 1746. Two years later he moved his entire family to Newport where he introduced the manufacture of Spermaceti candles, one of the most important sources of Newport's prosperity in the days that followed. He occupied a high position in the commercial, social and religious life of the prosperous Jewish community of Newport before the Revolution. He gave many valuable gifts to the Synagogue. Brigadier de Choisy who was honored by having his portrait in Trumbull's "Surrender of Yorktown" was quartered in this house. South of this house was the Ferry house and docks of the Ellery Ferry that ran to and from Jamestown, R. I. It was purchased by Benjamin Ellery in 1770 and was the only known ferry running during the Revolution. It is recorded in the colonial records under the year

1776—"the commanding officer of the forces on Rhode Island was directed to remove the troops from the ferry house on the Point belonging to Benjamin Ellery in order that the ferry may be kept running as usual." The ferry house and the docks have disappeared together with several other old houses near by, one of which, the Dennis house, home of a noted Rhode Island privateersman, that stood on the corner of Briggs' Wharf and the street, was said to resemble the Lopez house on the Parade.

In 1795 the first public school in New England was started on Washington Street by a gift from Simeon Potter, a Swansea merchant. He gave to the Trustees of Long Wharf the property,—"on the Point called Easton's Point which came to me by way of mortgage, for a debt due from Hayes and Pollock, if you will accept the same in trust to support a free school forever for the advantage of the poor children of every denomination and to be under the same regulation as you desired the free school be that you designed to erect." This school was started on October 1814 in the old house now standing on the northeast corner of Washington and Marsh Streets, under the direction of Joseph Finch and his wife who occupied the second floor.

South of the school on the water side of the street was the Gibbs shipyard in later years known as Crandall's shipyard. This business was active as late as 1860 when the ship "Redwood" was launched there. Many other warehouses and docks stood below the shipyard before reaching the Long Wharf. On the corner of the wharf and Washington Street stood a very old Tavern known as the Washington Tavern. It had for its sign a large unrecognizable portrait of the first president swinging over its door. This old building was used as the Ferry house for Barney's Ferry, that ran to and from Jamestown, R. I. This old hostelry with its sign disappeared many years ago, and the land was purchased by the New England Steamship Company.

Turning into Bridge Street, once called Shipwright Street, it is difficult to realize that the south side of the street overlooked water, but the tract of land occupied by the railroad and other buildings to the south of the street was once a body of water

called "The Cove". The old houses on this street have been sadly neglected. The William Redwood house standing on the north side of the street near Washington was built by Samuel Helme, a Philadelphia merchant, about 1755. His daughter married William Redwood, brother of Abraham Redwood, founder of the Library. After the death of Helme, the property came into the hands of the Redwoods, who resided there until after the Revolution. Rear Admiral Chevalier de Touches was quartered in this house during the occupation of the French troops.

Job Townsend, one of Newport's early cabinet makers lived on the southwest corner of Bridge and Second Street. John Goddard was apprenticed to him, later marrying his daughter Hannah. Goddard became far more famous than his master; his furniture selling at fabulous prices. On the south side of Bridge Street, on the site now occupied by a coal yard stood the Kendall Nichols house. Nichols was born in Reading, Mass., in 1686, became a Freeman in Newport in 1710, and died in 1767. It is said that the old house was used as a spermaceti factory by a Jewish merchant named Samuel Moses. The Benjamin Ingraham house stood on the north side of the street, near the railroad tracks, and was owned by one of the merchants who had his business interest in the Cove. The old house was sadly neglected and was used in later years as a lumber shed until just a few years ago it was torn down to make room for a lumber yard

Beyond the railroad track stands a large hip-roofed house, once the home of Peter Simons, a merchant who was naturalized in 1752. To this house his son, also named Peter, brought his bride, the beautiful Hannah Robinson, daughter of Rowland Robinson, a wealthy Narragansett merchant. Her father bitterly opposed this marriage and refused to have anything more to do with his daughter. Possibly her father may have had some grounds for his opposition, for when Peter learned that her father had disinherited her, he deserted her in Providence, where he had taken her to live. Hannah ill, living on charity, tried to earn a scant living by taking sewing. She constantly begged her father's forgiveness, but her stern Quaker parent remained obdurate and ignored her

pleading until her unele intereeded and persuaded him to bring her back to his home in Narragansett. The reconeilliation eame too late, and after a short illness she died in 1773, at the age of twenty-seven. Mr. Simons, the husband, went to Europe soon after her death and never returned to Ameriea.

The old house on Thames Street faeing Bridge Street, has an interesting history eonneeted with the large ehimney on it. Prior to the Revolution, it belonged to a Job Bennett, of whom little is known, as he was a Tory and fled to Canada when hostilities broke out in Ameriea. His property was eonfiseated by the General Assembly. To indieate that the oeeupants were loyal to the British soldiers, a eonspieuous mark was painted on the ehimney. This mark was preserved by later owners until 1910, when the ehimney needed repairs. The owners pointed out the mark to the workmen and gave them instruetions not to touch it. After a brief absenee from home, the owner returned to find the ehimney eompletely eovered with eement and the eherished mark obliterated.

At the upper end of Thames Street is the site of William Ellery's House. Ellery was one of the signers of the Deelaration of Independenee from Rhode Island. Prior to the Revolution Ellery was living on or near Bellevue Avenue, for it is reeorded in 1749 — "The first fire at whieh the first fire engine was used was at Ellery's house on the hill." He purehased the Thames Street estate from Asher Robbins in 1799, his own having been destroyed by the British troops during the oeeupation of the island. The land direetly opposite this site is oeeupied by the Liberty Tree. The first tree was deeded to William Ellery, John Collins, Robert Crooke, and Samuel Fowler by Captain William Read, who, "for and in consideration of the love of my eountry and the ardent desire to perpetuate to the lasting posterity the Liberties and privileges handed by my glorious ancestors and also for the further eonsideration of Five shillings lawful money . . . do hereby give, grant, bargain, sell and eonvey to them . . . a eertain large tree standing at the north end of Thames Street, in Newport, aforesaid and at the north end of my lot there . . . that the said tree forever hereafter be known as the tree of Liberty, and be set apart to and for the Sons of Liberty, and that the same

stand as a monument of the spirited and noble opposition made to the Stamp Act in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five, by the Sons of Liberty in Newport, R. I." This tree was destroyed by the English during the Revolution. In 1783, a group of men went to the farm of George Irish, just north of the Mile Corner, and securing a young tree, brought it to the town on their shoulders and planted it on the old site. This tree did not thrive and another was planted in 1876, which lived only a short time, and the present fern leaf beech was then planted.

Continuing down Thames Street, we pass the John Stevens Stone Cutting Shed. This establishment was founded in 1705 as a place for cutting memorials and other face stones. The old house that forms a triangle on the corner of Bridge and Cross Streets was once the home of the Reverend Gardner Thurston, pastor of the Second Baptist Church. Reverend Thurston was a cooper by trade but refused to use his craft for the manufacture of any kind of casks used in the shipment of New England rum "to the Coast." He was pastor of the Baptist Church from 1790 until 1801, and during that time he baptized 328 persons and married 1114 couples. The property later became the dwelling of William Messer, a retired sea captain, and is now converted into a store. Just across Bridge Street is the site of the Claggett House.

William Claggett was a versatile man with much ability in many lines, but especially noted as a clockmaker and an electrician. Claggett came to Newport in 1716 and was made a freeman in that year. In 1738 he was engraving and printing paper money for the State of Rhode Island. Prior to 1746 he became interested in electricity and constructed an electrical machine which he exhibited in Boston. Benjamin Franklin inspected his apparatus at Newport in 1746 and it has been suggested that Franklin derived his interest in electricity from Claggett and his apparatus. Several accounts in Boston papers show that he was also interested in making organs and that he made several instruments. Thus we have William Claggett identified as a merchant, a clockmaker, an author, an engraver, a printer, a maker of musical instruments, and a dabbler in the science of electricity. After the death of William Claggett, his son, Thomas, who was interested in elec-

tricity wrote to Dr. Franklin for a part that could not be purchased in the town. Franklin readily complied with the request, and refused to take money for the purchase.

Captain Jeremiah Lawton's house on the corner of Thames and North Baptist Streets was built about 1740-44 and has been in the hands of the present owner's family since 1818. It contains many interesting heirlooms inherited from the Goddard and Stevens families.

Almost directly across the street is a short courtway that bore the quaint name of "Scott's Folly". This peculiar name was derived from the large house that stood on the corner of Thames Street and the court. Tradition says that the house was built by a Judge Scott, grand uncle of Sir Walter Scott, and head of the first classical school in Rhode Island. The house was large and more pretentious than the means of the builder and was considered at that time a folly. It was later owned by Lieutenant Governor William Cozzens from whom the court now takes its name.

The house of William Hookey, the noted silversmith, stands on the southeast corner of Thames and Coddington Streets, now greatly changed to meet the requirements of a store. The mark WH on a piece of silver is a treasure for the collector of Colonial silver and is rarely found today.

Many of the merchants who had their business interests in the Cove resided on Thames Street. One of these men was Thomas Richardson who built his house just north of the Marlborough Dock in 1715. Richardson had large interests in a distillery with his brother Ebenezer. He was General Treasurer of the colony for nearly twenty years. Richardson's daughter married Thomas Robinson who was the eighth child of Governor William Robinson.

The Coddington mansion house still stands on the northeast corner of Thames and Marlborough Streets and was sold by the heirs of Governor William Coddington to Martin Howard in 1744, and at that time it was occupied by Dr. James Robinson. The purchaser was the father of Martin Howard, Jr., who with Dr.

Thomas Moffatt and Augustus Johnson were appointed in 1765, stamp masters by the Crown. Their acceptance of these offices made them highly unpopular. Their houses were attacked by an uncontrollable mob and they were forced to seek protection on board the *Cygnet*, a sloop of war, then in the harbor. At that time Mr. Howard, Jr., was living in the old Wanton house on Broadway. Mr. Howard went to North Carolina, where he was appointed Chief Justice the following year. He went to England in 1778 and died in Chelsea March 9, 1782.

Marlborough Street was one of the streets named for the renowned Duke. The lower end, now called West Marlborough Street was once the Marlborough Dock, and was the largest dock extending into the Cove. In 1823, a small steamer was built at a wharf just north of Long Wharf and after being launched sideways into the Cove, was subsequently towed through the bridge into the harbor. The engine was constructed according to some entirely new and novel ideas emanating from a Mr. John Babcock of Newport, after whom the boat was named.

It is apparent that the two oldest docks in Newport were the Marlborough Dock and the Long Wharf. The original date of the erection of the latter is unknown, but the records as early as 1685 mention the Towne Wharfe as it was called. In 1700 there is a reference to rebuild the wharf after a severe storm had destroyed it. In 1702, a proprietorship was formed consisting of sixty-three of the town's leading merchants. After the formation of this organization the growth of the wharf was rapid and interesting. Most of the business of the town was carried on here. Many interesting events took place on Gravelly Point, a strip of land that extended to the south of the wharf.

Early in May, 1723, the frigate *Greyhound*, Peter Solgard, commanding, while cruising off Long Island was attacked by two small sloops, which proved to be pirates. After a sharp battle, one of the sloops was captured and it was then learned that it was one of the vessels under command of Ned Low, a notorious New England pirate. These men had mistaken the King's vessel for a merchantman, and had discovered their mistake after the attack had started.

The *Greyhound* brought her prize into Newport harbor and the crew, thirty-six in number, were held for trial. In July an Admiralty Court, of whieh William Dummer, Lieutenant Governor of Massaehusetts, was President, sat in Newport to try the prisoners. The trial oeeupied two days and resulted in the conviction of twenty-six of the pirates who were senteneed to be hanged. The execution took plaee on Gravelly Point on the 19th of July, 1723. The bodies of these men were buried on Goat Island between high and low watermark. The wharf did not extend to the Point (City Doek) at this time, and it was neeesary for the populaee to go as far north as Walnut Street in order to witness the exeeution. Later in 1738 three Frenehmen were also exeeuted here on eharges of piraey.

In order to have aeeess to the Cove, and to extend the wharf, a bridge was needed; and on July 4th, 1741, Solomon Townsend was appointed to seeure a model of a windmill and drawbridge in Holland, at the expense of the proprietors. This bridge was not a sucessful pieee of engineering, until a regular swing bridge was installed about 1765. From time to time additions were made to the wharf until it was brought to its present length.

In 1781, Washington landed at Barney's Ferry at the foot of the wharf. He had eome to eonfer with Roehambeau about future plans of the eampaign. He was eseorted by Roehambeau and his staff, between lines of Freneh soldiers that were drawn to attention from the Ferry landing to the French headquarters on Clarke Street. The Freneh supply offieer, Martin was quartered at a home belonging to the Hon. Constant Taber, on the wharf. In 1794, Tallerande made a two weeks stay in Newport, lodging at an unidentified house on the wharf. Perhaps the best remembered man eonneeted with the wharf was Stephen T. Northam, who owned a large distillery just north of the wharf, and had interests in several whaling barks, one, the *Mechanic*, was tied to the Long Wharf for many years. She was one of the last of the Newport whalers. After an unsueeessful voyage (an old diary reeords—"April 12, 1860, Bark *Meehanie* arrived today 90 bbl. oil), remained tied to the wharf until she was sold to a wreeker who had her towed to the lower harbor, beached her and broke her apart

for the remaining saleable material." Later the hulk was sold to the Government to be used as a blockade with other hulks during the Civil War. Northam's house is still standing on Thames Street second north of Long Wharf. The old house that originally stood on the northwest corner of Thames Street and the wharf was moved to a short court off Edward Street.

In 1761, a company of comedians arrived in Newport from Williamsburg, Va., and having made applications to give a performance, a town meeting was called. The question was taken as to whether they should allow them to perform and the final vote was not in favor of it, but after a lengthy discussion, they were granted their wish. A temporary theatre was built at the upper part of the Point near Dyre's Grove, and the performance was well attended. This is said to have been the first company that ever performed in New England. The building was wrecked by a heavy windstorm that injured several actors. John Whipple on his return from the theatre was drowned from falling from the Point Bridge.

The building on the southwest corner of Thames Street and the Long Wharf was built by the Trustees of Long Wharf in 1760. The original lot had a frontage of thirty feet on Thames Street, and fifty-three feet deep. The committee consisting of Henry Collins, Joseph Bell, Augustus Johnson and Joseph Lyndon was appointed to confer with Peter Harrison who had previously designed the Jewish Synagogue and the Redwood Library. The committee found that the lot was not large enough for the building which they proposed to erect, and Mr. Gould who owned the property on the south agreed to give enough of his land to make the lot thirty-three feet wide, and the proprietors extended the bounds on the west fifteen feet. Soon after this the building was erected. The lower floors were used as a market place and the upper chambers were rented for theatrical purposes under the direction of Harper and Placide of the Boston Theatre, who opened the first permanent theatre with the tragedy "*Jane Shore*" in 1793. Another theatre was started in the Colony House in 1794, but was halted by the noise made by the corduroy looms that were operating in the basement and owned by David Buffum.

The Thomas Rodman house (1647-1727) stood on the corner of the Parade and Thames Street. This fine old house was once owned by the Wanton Brothers, and in later years became the medical center of the town.

It provided the offices for many prominent physicians—Dr. William Hunter who delivered the first anatomical and surgical lectures in the colony. Dr. John Haliburton, an eminent practitioner who married a daughter of Jahleel Brenton, Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, an outstanding figure in American medicines, and who introduced vaccinations into America, and Dr. Isaac Senter, beloved of all the community, who made the daring innovation of conducting a smallpox hospital on Conanicut Island. The old house was moved to a new location on Bridge Street when a store was built on the old site. It was changed into apartments and remained this way for many years until it was torn down to make room for a modern building.

Possibly the oldest and certainly one of the most important houses on Thames Street was the Sueton Grant house. This house was located on Thames Street on the present site of the Auditorium building. Sueton Grant came to Newport in 1725 and purchased the old Rowland Robinson house in that year. Because of the deplorable condition of the Newport records, the original owner is unknown, but it is attributed to be Walter Clarke or his father, both early Colonial Governors. It was considered an old house when Grant made the purchase. Grant was made Freeman in Newport in 1734 and from that time until 1740, he was engaged in the mercantile trade. When the war between England and France broke out in 1742, he turned his attention with other Newport merchants to fitting out privateers. In the spring of 1744, the second war between England and France was raging. The Newport merchants were busily engaged in fitting out more privateers to harass the French shipping industry. It was in September of that year that three of Newport's prominent merchants met an untimely death caused by the explosion of gunpowder. Mr. Grant was inspecting the loading of the privateer "*Prince George*" in company with Nathaniel Coddington and John Gidley at Col. Malbone's

wharf when an accidental discharge of a pistol gave fire to about 500 weight of gunpowder that was stored in the warehouse on the wharf. The terrific blast caused by the explosion blew the three aforementioned gentlemen from the house to a considerable distance. For a while there were hopes of their recovery, but to the sorrow of the entire community, the accident proved fatal to all three.

Another greatly changed house of Colonial architecture is the Wanton house now the Boston Store. This was the mansion house of Joseph Wanton a prominent merchant who was elected Governor for the seventh term in April 1775. Within a few days after the election when news arrived of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the legislature voted to raise 1500 men for an "army of observation". Wanton's unwillingness to this act caused the legislature to pass an act to suspend him from his functions as Governor, and at the end of October of the same year it deposed him,—since he had "continued to demonstrate that he is inimical to the rights and liberties of America." Wanton fled from the town and his property was confiscated by the General Assembly. This house served as quarters for the Viomesnil brothers during the French stay in Newport. Just across the street stood another Wanton house. This house was the home of John and William Wanton who were among the ablest, most distinguished and successful privateersmen of Colonial Newport. They were descendents of Edward Wanton, a Massachusetts officer who witnessed the execution of Mary Dyer and who, it is said, was converted to Quakerism by her fortitude. Another large mansion house once stood on the site of the present Covell building. This old house was once the property of Governor William Coddington and later belonged to George Gibbs, 1st, a prominent merchant.

On the west side of Thames Street, on the north corner of Champlin's wharf was a burial ground. In it were several graves, the most interesting were those of John and Harte Garde, two members of the early colony of whom little is known. John Champlin and John Garde were English merchants that came to Newport from Fayal, Azores. John Garde died in 1665, leaving his property to John Champlin. This is proven by a deed of Freedom,

which reads as follows:—

> *"thirtieth day of . . March . . John Chamlin heire to John Garde, deceased . . did declare that he gave his Negro Salmerdore his freedom . . . forever . . Newport on Rhode Island."*

There is also a reference to a burial ground in a deed of land dated 1683 and reads as follows—

> *"Phillip Jones to Rebecca Tailor and John Nelson, Fifteen day of June, one thousand six hundred and eighty-three . . . between Phillip Jones and Rebecca Tailor relict of William Tailor, desc. . . . . Phillip Jones for . . . Two hundred pound of current money of New England,—hath sold . . . all the messuage or tenement in the town of Newport with all the land belonging to the same (except the burial ground of John Gard and his wife) be upward of three quarters of an acre of land . . bounded on the south by land late belonging to William Brenton, Mer. desc., and bounded on the north on the land . . Capt. Peleg Sanford, abutting on the east on a hieway that extends north and south through the said town and so the land extendeth twelve feet in breadth down into the sea."*

The above property was merged into a business block, and the old graves were removed to the old Common Grounds off Warner Street. Harte Garde, wife of John Garde, died in 1660. This old stone, dated twenty years earlier than any dated stone in Ply-

mouth, Mass., reads as follows:—

Here . lyeth . the . Body . of . Harte
Garde . the . wife . of . John . Garde
Merchant . who . departed . This
Tie . 16 . Day . of . September . An
Dom . 1660
Aged . 55 . Years

1774631

The Duc de Lauzun, one of the leading menaces to the virtue of the court of France, found himself lodged with Mrs. Deborah Hunter, who lived on the southeast corner of Thames and Mary Streets. She was the widow of Dr. William Hunter, the famous anatomist. Comte Alex Ferson, aide-de-camp to General Rochambeau was quartered at Robert Stevens on New Lane (Mary Street) but spent many hours at the Hunters. He was a dashing Swedish officer, who was a great admirer of Marie Antoinette. The Hunter house has been greatly changed and converted into stores. South of this building was the store of Nicholas Geoffroy, another noted Newport Silversmith.

The Jahleel Brenton town house was next. Brenton had his summer estate on the site of the present Fort Adams. It is interesting to know that a British Naval Hospital was set up in the Brenton Summer house during the English occupation of the Island. The town house was later owned by Walter Channing, Benjamin Almy and Adam S. Coe.

Washington was entertained here in 1790, and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry occupied it in 1817, and here entertained President Monroe. In order that the President should have ample freedom during his stay in Newport, the Perry family moved to the Mason house farther down the street. After serving as a home to many notable Newporters, it became sadly neglected and the interior woodwork was sold, and the old house began to crumble. It remained in a state of decrepitude for many years, until recently the last vestage of the once stately mansion house was removed, and

on its site appeared a gasoline station.

The Cotton house standing on a short court off Thames Street is the last remaining house on the original line of Thames Street. It was built by an early Newport merchant named George Champlin. It passed into the hands of Newport's first Mayor, George Hazard, then to the Reverend Caleb Tenney from whom Dr. Cotton purchased it in 1817. Dr. Cotton was a surgeon-mate on the historic frigate *Constitution*, and was surgeon at the battle between the *Hornet* and the British ship *Peacock* and received from Congress a silver medal for gallant service. Directly across the street stood the Aaron Lopez estate. Lopez was a Jewish merchant who had a vast interest in the profitable slave trade. It is said that at one time he was the sole owner of thirty sailing vessels.

The Reverend James Honeyman, rector of Trinity Church had his town house on the southeast corner of Thames and Church Streets.

The house of Benedict Arnold, the first Governor under the charter of Charles II, was located on Thames Street on land extending from Mill to Pelham Street. Tradition says that the back foundation of Clarke's Newspaper Store formed the front foundation of the old house. An analysis of the mortar in the old wall shows it to be of the same composition as that of the old Stone Mill.

On the northeast corner of Thames and Pelham Street, stood the Townsend Coffee House, once owned by Thomas Bannister, later to become the property of Thomas Townsend. It was a celebrated resort for most intelligent men of the times. Bannister was a loyalist and his property was given to Col. William Barton by the General Assembly as a reward for the capture of General Prescott. In later years when the old house was altered, a new front was placed on Thames Street and that part of the old house was moved to a location on Mt. Vernon Street, where it still stands.

In 1820 there stood on the south corner of Bannister's Wharf and Thames Street, a very old house whose gambrelled roof projected several feet over the Thames Street side. This old building

was one of the first buildings erected on the west side of Thames Street.

On the southwest corner of Pelham and Thames Street lived David Melville, who had the distinction of introducing gas lighting in America. He equipped Beaver Tail Lighthouse for gas in 1817, making this old beacon the first gas operated light in America.

Just below stands the Mason house. It was the home of Dr. Benjamin Mason, whose daughter married Oliver Hazard Perry. It was in this house that Perry wooed his wife — here she greeted him when he returned victorious from Lake Erie, and from here the family joined the funeral procession that formed at Sayer's Wharf when the Commodore's body was brought here for burial.

In 1774, Samuel King occupied a store on the southeast corner of Thames and Prospect Hill Street. He was a skillful manufacturer of mathematical and nautical instruments. Mr. King was also one of the early Newport artists and painted many likenesses of the early Newport "Belles". He taught the rudiments of his art to Gilbert Stuart, Washington Allston and the famous miniaturist Edward Greene Malbone. Mr. King's studio was on the northeast corner of Thames and Church Street. His store was adorned by a large figure of an ancient mariner that was believed to have been made from a broken spar of some vessel, and was known to the public as "Captain Groton". This image led a roving and adventurous career. After the death of Mr. King, the figure became the property of Deacon Joseph Sanford's establishment until his death in 1841, when the "mariner" disappeared from view. After a time he was again seen on the tower of an engine house that fronted Franklin Street. Shorn of his quadrant that he originally clasped in his hand, and in its place was a fire nozzle. He occupied this position until the firehouse was removed. The next appearance was in a corner of Thomas Spooner's Paint Shop on John Street where he underwent repairs and redecoration. For a time he was again lost to sight, until his whereabouts were accidently discovered on the highest peak of a barn located near the West Ferry in Jamestown, R. I. It was apparent that for some-

time he had been holding a lightning rod, and his pitiable condition indicated that lightning had passed down the rod and tore away both arms. He returned to Newport where for a while he adorned the peak of Gyles Barney's blacksmith shop on Marlborough Street. After a few months he appeared on the boat building shop of Lewis Barlow's on Long Wharf. A long time after the death of Mr. Barlow, our image was discovered in an attic and was purchased by George W. Green, a well-known painter who did his best to restore his pristine elegance. The "mariner" stood for a number of years over the doorway of Mr. Green's shop at 213 Thames Street. Once more needing rehabilitation, he was taken inside, but to the regret of his admirers he straightway crumbled to dust.

On early maps, Franklin Street is called King Street, and during the occupation of the French troops it is referred to as Lewis Street. A beautiful carved doorway is exhibited in the Newport Historical Society that came from one of the old houses on this street. DeLentz and DeMontequiou, aides to the Chevalier de Chastellux, were quartered on this street. The best of the old houses were torn down when the Post Office building was erected.

Another old house of importance stood on a wharf off Thames Street, just below the Post Office. It was the home of Benedict Arnold, the oldest son of the first Governor of Rhode Island. It was built between the years 1671 when he was admitted Freeman, and 1727 the date of his death. After being used as a dwelling house for many years it became so badly in need of repairs that it was demolished. Its fine old interiors were purchased by a lover of Colonial architecture and thus saved for posterity.

The earliest known record of the Redwood family is the birth of Abraham Redwood, father of Abraham, the founder of the Library, who was born in Bristol, England in 1665. He made various voyages to Jamaica, on which island he married Mehetable Langford, daughter, of Jonas Langford, through whom he came into possession of valuable sugar plantations. He gave up the sea and settled in Antigua, remaining there until 1712, when he came to America and settled in Salem, Mass. Abraham,

their seeond son, was born in 1709, and gained his vast fortune by the death of his older brother. He was edueated in Philadelphia, and before he was twenty years old, married Martha Coggeshall, a Quaker maid. He purchased a large tract of land about five miles from Newport, where he built his country estate. This old house was the headquarters of Gen. Smith's during the occupation of the British, and is still standing, having been recently repaired by its present owner. His town house stood off Thames Street, in the rear of what is now Pinniger and Manehester's Coal office. The large gateposts at the north entrance of the Redwood Library originally stood in the front of the Thames Street estate. Redwood will be remembered as the donor of a large amount of money to erect the present Redwood Library. Redwood died in 1788 at the age of seventy-nine, and is buried in the Coggeshall Burial Ground in Newport, R. I.

John Gidley, Senior, eame from Exon, Devon, England to Newport where he died April 28, 1710. He was Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court. His son John met a tragie death by an explosion of gunpowder which also caused the deaths of Nathaniel Coddington and Sueton Grant. His residence stood on the southeast corner of Thames and Gidley Streets, later the home of Major John Breese, an English officer who belonged to the 54th regiment of Foot. When the English withdrew from the Island, Breese retired from the Army and settled in Newport. He married Elizabeth Malbone, daughter of Franeis Malbone. In 1796 he was appointed British Vice Counsul for the State of Rhode Island. He died in Newport, April 23, 1799. When the large business block was built on the corner of Gidley Street, the old house was moved around the corner where it still stands.

On the southwest eorner of Ann and Thames Streets, stood the Ayrault house, built about 1739. The architects of this house were Daniel Wyatt and Richard Munday. The latter drew the plans for the Colony house on Washington Square. One of Ayraults daughters married Jahleel Brenton. The beautiful shell doorway was removed to the Historical Society when the house was torn down. It is said that the inner hood was lined with gold. Stephen Ay-

rault died in 1794 at the age of eighty-four, having rendered many services to the community and its institutions. The house was later known as the Thomas Teagle Taylor house.

The town house of Godfrey Malbone, one of Newport's leading merchants is still standing, just below Brewer Street. It is a large brick house that had a heavy iron gate and railing. The gateposts were surmounted by stone pineapples, and the iron gate bore the initials G.M. in the center. During the English occupation, the house was used as the Treasury Office. Mr. Malbone came to Newport from Virginia and was immediately recognized as a man of fine character. He built a large country house about a mile from Newport in 1744. Earlier in 1736 he presented the town with its first fire engine, one that he had imported from England. In 1766 his country estate was destroyed by fire while a large party was being held there. Mr. Malbone died in 1788 and was buried in a vault under Trinity Church of which he was one of the founders.

Just across the street stood the Captain William V. Taylor house. Taylor was a sailing master who left Newport with one hundred and forty others to go with Perry to Lake Erie. At a town meeting in October 1813, the citizens of Newport placed one hundred dollars at the disposal of a committee to secure a suitable present to show their appreciation of his great bravery and meritorious conduct under Commodore Perry.

Many other prominent men had their homes on lower Thames Street, among whom were Evan Malbone, Henry Marchant, Henry John Overing, Peter Bours, Robert N. Auchmuty.

On looking at the billetting list of the French Officers in the Newport Historical Society, Overing's house is given as No. 10 Thames Street As we think of the street now, it would seem as if this house should be at the head of the street near Poplar. However the Bull's memoirs of 1760 state that Overing's wharf was the southermost dock in the town. It is therefore safe to assume that his house was close by. Mr. Overing's property was seized by the General Assembly when the Revolution broke out, but he will always be remembered in American history as the owner of the house in

Portsmouth, R. I., which was the center of activities on the night of July 11, 1777, when Col. William Barton captured the English General Richard Prescott.

Henry Marchant's dwelling is unknown, as there are no records of this eminent lawyer's home. Marchant was born in Martha's Vineyard in 1741 and died in Newport in 1796. In 1770 he was elected Attorney General of the Colony, which office he held until 1777, when he was sent as a delegate to the Continental Congress. During the occupation of Newport by the English forces, Marchant lived in Narragansett. He was president of the Redwood Library from 1791 until his death.

Peter Bours, another Newport merchant was made a Freeman in 1728. In 1739 he was one of a committee with George Goulding, George Wanton and Ezbon Sanford to procure material for the building of the Colony House. Bours died in 1761, then in the fifty-sixth year of his age

Robert Nichols Auchmuty, another prominent lawyer, was born in 1758. He graduated at King's College and later served in the Revolution as a volunteer in the British army. He married Henrietta Overing, his first cousin, and daughter of Henry John Overing. Auchmuty died in 1813.

Peter Harrison, the noted architect, was born in England in 1716, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth (Dennison) Harrison. Of his early life there is little known, but a tradition places him at Blenheim as one of the "assistant architects." If there is anything in the story at all, the honor far more probably belongs to his elder brother Joseph. Nevertheless Peter had a sound architectural training in the old world. There is a story that Peter landed in Newport with Smibert and Berkeley in 1728, but has little foundation, for records show that his first appearance in the country was in 1740, when he disembarked at Rhode Island, "a passenger with Captain Patterson". With him, or at about the same time, came his brother Joseph. It seems not unlikely that they arrived as surveyors or draughtsmen in connection with the colony's boundary disputes, then in full agitation. In such a capacity, at all events,

Peter first made his mark here We find him "giving a plan of Cape Breton which facilitated its capture," in 1745. During the same year he was assisted by his brother in making "a handsome draught of Fort George and the harbor of Newport." He married Elizabeth Pelham, daughter of Edward Pelham, Jr., and from her family inherited large tracts of land in the neighborhood of the Ocean Drive. Joseph Harrison was the original architect of the Redwood Library, and when his plans were not accepted, Peter successfully completed them. Joseph was appointed Collector of Customs in New Haven and during the year 1766 he sailed for England and turned the job over to his brother Peter, who left Newport for that city in the same year. Peter's loyalty to the English cause made him highly unpopular with the "Sons of Liberty". His house was looted by a mob and his extensive library and professional papers destroyed. Such treatment had a tragic end for he died "in a fit" a few days after the Battle of Lexington.

Thus we reach the end of the principal old business streets of the early days, with the mention of some of the old homes and their owners, though only a portion of the interesting history of the early town.

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